

Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears which was signed by all five polar bear nations, including Canada and the United States.

The Embassy staff remains available to meet with your staff to discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely,

MICHAEL WILSON,
Ambassador.

But this would also, I believe, not reduce the number of polar bears harvested. There is a certain number, again based on scientific studies in Canada, that go to native tribes in northern Canada for their management and use. If it's not hunters using it, the natives will use it. So this will not in any way diminish the number of polar bears being legally hunted right now in Canada.

I would ask my colleagues, take a look at the "Dear Colleagues" that we've submitted as part of the Sportsmen's Caucus setting forth more fully an explanation of why we oppose the amendment. And I would encourage our colleagues to oppose this amendment.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. BOREN).

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair will notify Members that debate on a pro forma amendment is not controlled.

Mr. DICKS. Okay. So I just yield?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Yes.

Mr. DICKS. Can you let me know when 1 minute is gone?

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair will let the gentleman know.

Mr. BOREN. Mr. Chairman, I rise in opposition to the Inslee amendment. This amendment would ban the importation of trophies taken legally from healthy polar bear populations in Canada.

Removing incentives for U.S. hunters to hunt polar bear in Canada would do nothing to reduce the number of polar bear harvested in Canada. It would just lessen the resources that can be used for conservation and management of these species.

Similar to all wildlife conservation funding, U.S. hunters support polar bear conservation through fees that they pay. Permit fees directly support polar bear research and conservation in the United States and Russia.

Mr. Chairman, this management practice that has occurred in places like Canada has contributed to the rebound of the population of the polar bear for numbers somewhere around 6,000 to 20,000 today. Mr. Chairman, this amendment would do nothing for conservation of polar bears. It is simply one step further in the campaign to ban hunting.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, I now will yield my remaining time to Mr. INSLEE, and I rise in strong support of his amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman has 2 minutes remaining.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Chairman, I yield 30 seconds to Mr. FERGUSON.

Mr. FERGUSON. I want to thank my friend from Washington and my friend from New Jersey, and others, for supporting this amendment.

I also rise in strong support of this amendment today. We can see here a picture of a beautiful polar bear. Recently, the polar bear was listed as threatened under our Endangered Species Act. I don't believe that allowing hunters to obtain permits to hunt these animals and bring them into our country is a responsible environmental policy, with the loss of habitat that these animals are enduring. And with a 30 percent population decline predicted in the next 35 to 50 years, we ought to be doing everything in our power to preserve this species, and this amendment seeks to do just that.

It is our responsibility to create responsible environmental policies to protect our planet for future generations, and I think this amendment does exactly that.

Mr. INSLEE. I would like to address this canard that this is an anti-hunting amendment.

In fact, Americans enjoy passing down the tradition of hunting to their kids, their sons and daughters; and that tradition should be able to continue. But if the prey is gone, there is no hunting. And if we don't get serious about recovering polar bears, we will not be able to hunt anything because they will not exist. And if we don't stop this loophole which allows importing polar bear heads, contrary to the Marine Mammal Protection Act, we cannot tell our children we are serious about recovering this species.

Listen to the science. In 40 years will there will be no polar ice cap. And shooting polar bears and putting them in our dens in Texas or any other great State in this country is not consistent with what we did for the American bald eagle. And if we work together, hunters, nonhunters, left and right, east and west, we can accomplish this goal. But I'm suggesting this is a common-sense measure to close this loophole and listen to the science.

These species are going to have a 30 percent decline in the next 30 years. Three of the six Canadian groups that are already hunted are deemed at risk by the international scientific community.

I don't know what the Canadians are thinking. It's a great country; they're the greatest ice hockey teams in the world. But maybe they haven't got the best polar bear policy like we do in the good old USA.

Enforce the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Bring some common sense. Tell our kids we're going to keep these species available to them and pass this amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Chair will remind the gentleman from Washington that he has 15 seconds remaining in his previous time which he may wish to reserve to close.

Mr. INSLEE. I will reserve to close.

Mr. TIAHRT. I just want to remind the gentleman from Washington, it's not a loophole, it's the law today.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Utah (Mr. BISHOP).

Mr. BISHOP of Utah. Let me just say I appreciate the gentleman representing this picture of a polar bear. It's not Knut. Knut, of course, is the infamous polar bear cub the animal rights groups who support this amendment wanted the Berlin Zoo to kill as opposed to allow it to live in captivity. I'm glad it's not the same one.

This amendment does nothing to preserve polar bears. It's not about preservation, especially when it cuts conservation funds in the process.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Chairman, I yield the balance of my time to the gentleman from Alaska (Mr. YOUNG).

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. I am thankful for the comments of the previous speaker, and of course the ranking member. I'm disappointed in those that are offering this amendment.

The supporters of this amendment and the proposer of this amendment like to believe that Chicken Little threats have been thrown about. Instead of the sky falling, it's the Earth warming, and bears are in extreme danger of extinction and we must act now. I just heard that speaker from Washington say that.

Let's take care. Polar bears are not threatened; they're not endangered. The worldwide population of polar bears is around 30,000. While there may be polar bear populations feeling the effects of a warming climate, and I say "may," we need to remember these species have survived past warming cycles.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the last word.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Chairman, I yield to the gentleman from Alaska.

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. This species is not at the end of its rope, contrary to those who proposed this amendment. Thirteen of the 19 polar bear populations are under the jurisdiction of Canada. Canada has one of the best management programs, using state-of-art scientific practices to manage these populations. While that should be enough, it's not the end of the oversight or management of polar bears in Canada.

The United States Marine Mammal Protection Act requires the Fish and Wildlife Service to review the status of polar bear populations in Canada. After conducting their review of the service-approved, stable and healthy populations, hunters can only import trophies from those approved populations.

Supporters of the amendment like to refer to the 1994 amendments of the Marine Protection Act that allowed an importation of polar bear trophies as a loophole. It was the law. These statements are far from the truth. In fact, we worked on it with a Democrat-controlled Congress. We worked on it together to improve the species in Canada because Canada asked us to do so.